DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 577 UD 032 429

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TITLE Inequities in Teacher Allocation: Policy and Practice in Urban School Districts.

PUB DATE 1998-04-00

NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Administrators; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Minority Groups; School Districts; Teacher Competencies; Teacher Education; Teacher Qualifications; Teacher Recruitment; *Teacher Supply and Demand; *Urban Schools; Urban Teaching

ABSTRACT

Using data from three urban school districts, this paper examines policies and practices that contribute to inequities in the allocation of well-qualified, experienced teachers within these school systems. The research attempts to focus on some of the subtle and less directly observable influences on school district policies and practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in urban school districts in a Northeastern central city, a large Southeastern metropolitan area, and a smaller Southeastern district. Respondents included nine school administrators, three district officials, a retired principal who supervises student teachers, and an education specialist with the local government. Although the small size of the sample makes generalization difficult, the data provide insights into practices that have not been widely examined. Administrators in low-income schools agree that they have smaller, lower-quality applicant pools, and that their difficulties in developing relationships with student teacher programs places them at a further disadvantage in hiring. Due to seniority-based transfer provisions, effective teachers that principals are fortunate enough to recruit often leave after they accumulate a few years of experience. Unsatisfactory teachers tend to remain in place until an exchange for another marginal teacher is arranged. Low-income schools cannot count on parent pressure for high standards to influence their teachers. Obviously some conditions associated with inequities in teacher allocation are more amenable to redress through policy changes than others, but districts can improve access to quality teaching. Of critical concern is the ability to find incentives that will help attract and retain effective teachers. Methods of dealing with teacher transfer must be developed, and ways to promote relationships with teacher training programs will be needed. The commitment by a district's leadership to better resource allocation and personnel policies that allow low-income schools to recruit more desirable teacher candidates is needed. (Contains 29 references.) (SLD)

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ED 421 577

INEQUITIES IN TEACHER ALLOCATION: POLICY AND PRACTICE IN URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association
Annual Meeting, San Diego
April 1998

UD032429

INEQUITIES IN TEACHER ALLOCATION:

POLICY AND PRACTICE IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A particularly troubling aspect of the inequities suffered by low-income students in many of the nation's urban school systems is the quality of teaching they receive. Researchers have long contended that one of the most pressing needs in schools with large proportions of students from low-income families is to improve the recruitment and retention of competent, dedicated teachers (Passow, 1963; Clark, 1965; Darling-Hammond, 1995; Oakes, 1990; Ferguson, 1991). A major national report on teacher supply and demand has recently raised concerns about staffing our nation's schools in coming decades (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). In addition, in the summer of 1997, President Clinton brought attention to the problem of staffing low-income schools when he announced plans to create a program to alleviate teacher shortages in poor districts by providing incentives for students to enter teacher training programs and to subsequently work in high poverty areas (Bennet, 1997).

While the problem of teacher shortages in low-income schools is widely acknowledged, the conditions that contribute to difficulties associated with developing and maintaining an effective, well-qualified staff in schools with high concentrations of poverty have been too little examined and understood. Using data from three urban school districts, this paper examines policies and practices which contribute to inequities in the allocation of well-qualified, experienced teachers within these school systems. A "portrait of the processes" (Coleman, 1957, p. 3) is developed to extend existing knowledge about the way teacher allocation really happens. Official policies and unofficial practices are analyzed to identify underlying patterns which contribute to the inequitable allocation of teacher resources in urban school districts. Suggestions are then made about the ways in which high poverty

schools can better attract and retain well-qualified teachers to assure that all students, regardless of social status, will have more equal opportunities to learn.

Theoretical Framework

Lasswell's (1958) classic "Who Gets What, When, How" approach helps to guide this inquiry into teacher placement policies and practices and to identify ways in which interested individuals and groups exert their influence on these decisions. In "Two Faces of Power" Bachrach and Baratz (1986) point out that it is necessary to look not only at direct influences on decision making but also to examine indirect influences on policy and those persons or groups who stand to gain or lose as a result of the status quo. To that end, this research attempts to focus on some of the subtle and less directly observable influences on school district policies and practices. Because, as Banfield (1965) points out, "there is usually a good deal of difference between the way things are supposed to be done and the way they actually are done in large cities"(p. 6), it is important to examine both official and unofficial policy to develop an understanding of the underlying patterns of power and influence which may be associated with the inequitable allocation of teacher resources in urban school districts. Although terms like "power" and "influence" lack standard definitions and often defy attempts at measurement (Dahl, 1991), these concepts are useful in an effort to understand the political dimensions of the teacher placement process.

In his analysis of the interrelationship among politics, economics, and social position, Verba (1990, p. 42) states that "economic inequality impedes the achievement of political equality as money is converted into political influence. Wide disparities in economic resources leak into the political realm as disparities in political influence." This perspective also guides the inquiry by providing a framework for interpretation of the ways in which a combination of economic and political issues may be associated with the maintenance of inequities by the practices and constraints involved with teacher hiring and placement in urban public schools.

Data and Methods

Lengthy, semi-structured interviews were conducted in three urban school districts: a Northeastern central city; a large Southeastern metropolitan area; and a smaller Southeastern district. Respondents included 9 school administrators, three district officials, a recently retired principal who now supervises student teachers for a large university in one of the districts, and an education specialist affiliated with local government. To provide a broader perspective on teacher allocation issues, interviews were also conducted with a representative from each of the major national teacher organizations in addition to an interview with a local union official in one of the districts. A former college of education dean and two college professors with personal knowledge of local district policy and practice were also interviewed.

School administrators participating in this study were chosen on the basis of their reputations as effective leaders in their schools. This was, of course, a subjective determination. Recommendations by their peers as well as from professors in colleges of education played the primary role in the selection process. By choosing to interview administrators who are highly regarded among their peers and in their communities, it was expected that a clearer picture of the independent effect of concentrated poverty on staffing could be recognized.

All the interview participants have extensive and varied experience in their city public school systems. Because of the sensitive nature of many of the questions to be raised and the initial reluctance of some who were contacted to be interviewed on this subject, respondents were assured of anonymity. To further protect the participants' identities, the names of the cities in which they work were changed in the report of the findings which follows.

Most interviews were face-to-face; a few were conducted by telephone. Interviews focused on the following questions (with appropriate modifications for informants who are not in administrative roles):

1. In thinking about recruiting and keeping effective teachers, does the location of your school have any impact on your efforts?

2. Does the perceived safety of your school and the surrounding neighborhood have any influence on your teacher recruitment efforts?
3. Do the kinds of students in your school have an effect on your ability to recruit and retain teachers?
4. Are temporary, full-time substitute teachers (i. e., teachers who lack the required credentials but are hired on a temporary basis when credentialed teachers are not available) often assigned to your school? What problems, if any, are associated with having these kinds of employees in your school? Do some schools tend to get more of these teachers?
5. How would you describe your own influence over teacher hiring decisions?
6. How would you characterize the results of your district's policies and practices regarding teacher transfer on your ability to retain effective teachers?
7. What efforts do you make to increase teacher job satisfaction? What else do you think would be helpful in retaining quality teachers in your school?

Analysis of data generated from these interviews focuses on the impact of school location and perception of neighborhood safety, the effect of students' characteristics on recruitment and retention, the importance of receiving student teachers, the influence of school administrators on hiring and transfer, and district policy regarding initial placement and voluntary transfer. No attempt was made to quantify associations between various characteristics of the respondents and the information which they provided. Rather, the analysis emphasizes identification of the primary issues and concerns voiced by the respondents and the relationship of these issues to school-level poverty concentration.

Because the sample is small, generalization to all urban school districts is necessarily tentative. In addition, the study relies primarily on the perspective of school and district-level administrators and union officials. While union representatives provide information regarding the official position of teachers on allocation issues, additional research would benefit from directly tapping the opinions of individual teachers as well. Despite these difficulties, the data provide insights into practices which have not been widely examined, and the findings extend present knowledge of the issues surrounding the allocation of teacher resources in urban public schools.

The Districts

The North Harbor school system is located in a large Northeastern urban center populated by a variety of racial and ethnic groups. As in most American cities, there are enormous disparities in income among its residents. Neighborhood schools tend to reflect the patterns of race and income found in their surroundings. Interview participants work in schools with enrollments which range from almost 100% minority and 98% eligible for free lunch to enrollments drawn from largely middle- and upper-middle class families.

Cross City, the larger Southeastern district, was desegregated some twenty years ago and presently has a metropolitan structure. In addition to low-income, minority schools in its inner city, Cross City has schools which are identified as high poverty white schools. Raymond, the smaller Southeastern district, was nominally desegregated during approximately the same period as Cross City. Although not a metropolitan district, the Raymond school system draws its enrollent from city, suburban, and rural areas. While wide variations in income level are found in most Raymond schools, it has remained highly segregated by race. At the time of the interviews, none of the districts studied used site-based management nor did they offer teachers any formal involvement in personnel decisions. All three districts have official policies of central hiring and placement of teachers by their respective personnel departments. Except for Cross City, however, the informal application procedure for many teachers is to apply directly to the schools of their choice. Principals then express their hiring preferences to district staff, a process described more fully below.

Recruitment and Hiring

Emerging from these interviews are a number of issues believed to be associated with the ability of urban schools with high concentrations of poverty to recruit and hire well-qualified, effective teachers. Previous research has shown that among the factors that may influence teacher job satisfaction are the socioeconomic status of their students (Herriot and St. John, 1966; Metz, 1978, 1987), the school's reputation for student misbehavior (Doll, 1972; Sizer, 1984), and the length of commute to work (Havighurst, 1967). Predictably then, when asked about factors that influence the size and quality of their pool of applicants, administrators uniformly focus on the reputation a school has in its community,

among education professionals, and in colleges of education, indicating that these factors have a direct impact on where and how prospective teachers apply for jobs. The size of a school's applicant pool can be influenced by the school's reputation as high status, low status, "desirable," or "difficult," based on perceptions about the characteristics of a school's enrollment and the working conditions there.

However, prevailing views of school location as a powerful determinant of recruiting ability tend to oversimplify the issue. While most informants in the study agreed that location of the school can play an important role in attracting teachers, they typically did not consider location a definitive factor in teachers' decisions about where to work. In a sense, administrators view a desirable location as both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, if the neighborhood is considered safe, the school is often more attractive to potential applicants. On the other hand, some administrators complain that their good locations make them the recipients of far too many unwanted teacher transfer requests, a topic discussed below.

While there is little doubt that safety concerns and commuting distance are factors taken into account by teachers when choosing positions, interview respondents contradict predictions that less desirable locations necessarily preclude a well-qualified applicant pool. Instead they believe that a supportive climate with motivated students can overcome problems associated with school location. Typical of the observations on the influence of location on a teacher's choice of workplace was the following statement by a Northeastern principal: "Really dedicated teachers aren't especially interested in the school's location. They are looking for an environment that suits their style. Some do want the convenience to home or the reputation attached to the neighborhood." On this point another North Harbor principal was emphatic: "They will commute from Alaska if they're happy otherwise."

An issue given little notice in the literature but consistently emphasized as significant in these interviews is the ability to attract and subsequently hire student teachers. Interview participants pointed out that student teachers are usually sent to "functioning" schools. Even if the school itself has a good reputation, colleges are often reluctant to place student teachers there if the neighborhood is considered dangerous. In general, college teacher preparation programs, informants believe, do not want to run the risk of negative publicity from unpleasant "incidents" that might discourage future recruits to the teacher education program or damage the college's reputation.

The large metropolitan Southeastern district, Cross City, has large numbers of student teachers because there are several schools of education in the surrounding area. Administrators see this as a major advantage for their schools. A highly prestigious university in the area provides the district with some well-qualified recruits who might otherwise be reluctant to take inner-city assignments.

Generally, administrators of low-income schools believe that, if they can get teachers to consider employment at their schools, especially through a student teaching experience, they stand a far better chance of hiring the teachers they want. The only exception was a North Harbor administrator of an affluent school in an especially desirable location who gets "stacks of resumes." All other interview respondents stressed the importance of recruiting student teachers in their schools.

It seems clear that the inability to attract student teachers may have far-reaching consequences for schools with high concentrations of poverty for a number of reasons. First, most of the respondents mentioned the opportunity student teaching provides for both the prospective teacher and the administrator to determine if there is a "match" in philosophy and purpose between the school and the teacher. Second, administrators from the North Harbor expressed the desirability of getting "fresh" recruits. Evidently, because of the sheer size of their school system, teachers can sometimes obscure records of poor past performance. Many of the administrators have hired experienced teachers only to find that they had previously received unsatisfactory ratings or were not properly licensed.

Third, respondents report that student teacher programs often provide an opportunity to recruit well-trained minority applicants who might not otherwise be known to the principal. Finally, and probably most importantly, having student teachers allows a school the "first crack" at recruits. Administrators regard this as critical because teachers tend to stay, at least for many years, in the schools to which they are first assigned.

Earlier research emphasizing "firm-specific" human capital theory is consistent with these views. A number of these studies have found that, as employees develop skills and attributes that are specific to their workplaces (or "firms"), such as good relationships with peers, familiarity with supervisors, knowledge of workplace rules, and accumulation of seniority, they tend to find it more difficult to use their training and experience in other settings (e. g., Parsons, 1972; Grissmer and Kirby, 1987).

Similarly, studies of teacher job mobility predict that, as teachers make large investments in human capital in a single school or district, they are less likely to leave their jobs (Greenberg and McCall, 1974; Sweeney and Murnane, 1988). The experiences of informants interviewed in this study supports the "firm-specific" human capital perspective. After actual experience in an "undesirable" school setting, teachers often discover that the school and its location are not so threatening after all. They become comfortable in the school, get to know the parents, and develop contacts within the community and school district. The implications are clear: If low-income schools miss out on the initial opportunity to hire quality teachers, they will be unlikely to recruit them away from other schools in the future.

Temporary Full-time Substitutes

In many large, urban school systems there often are vacant teaching positions for which there are no qualified applicants, especially in inner-city neighborhoods. When job openings cannot be filled by licensed teachers, provisions may be made to hire temporary full-time substitutes (Kelley, 1987). In most school systems these substitute teachers have virtually the same duties as regularly-hired teachers, but their job status varies according to the provisions of union contracts and school district rules in various locations. Contrary to expectations, a few principals in North Harbor's high poverty concentration schools actually expressed a preference for temporary substitutes over regularly-hired teachers. Because the quality of their applicants is so often unsatisfactory, principals find it advantageous to have an opportunity to assess job performance before the teacher becomes a regular employee.

While administrators in North Harbor gave temporary substitute teachers decidedly mixed reviews, all agreed that schools with large numbers of poor and minority students tend to get the most temporary teachers. Because of the complicated licensing procedures in their school system, however, many competent and otherwise well-qualified people choose to be hired as temporary substitutes rather than subject themselves to the system's usual hiring practices for regular teachers. As a result, administrators believe that some of their best teachers come to them as substitutes.

Informants from the Southeastern districts, even in high poverty schools, indicate that they have few problems in filling vacancies. The difference in experience among the districts studied seems to result from variations in local supply and demand for teachers. Secure jobs for college graduates have been relatively scarce in the parts of the Southeast in which these districts are located. In addition, there are many small colleges and universities with teacher education programs near their districts. As a result, there is usually little difficulty in finding at least minimally-qualified applicants to fill job openings.

Teacher Retention and Transfer

Keeping effective teachers in low-income urban schools has long been considered enormously problematic. For decades researchers have found that, when teachers request job transfers (Becker, 1951; Havighurst, 1967; Greenberg and McCall, 1973; Murnane, 1981), they tend to move from lower to higher status schools. Interview participants in the Northeast consistently mentioned teacher transfer as a major aspect of the difficulties faced by high poverty schools in keeping their best teachers. The problem in North Harbor was plainly stated: "Teachers often see transfer out of the inner-city as a 'justifiable right' and this has been institutionalized by the seniority system that allows teachers with five years or more of experience to apply to any school with an opening."

The transfer system appears to place low-income schools in a sort of double bind. According to interviews in North Harbor, their poor and minority schools often have the most ineffective teachers because the "barely certified" teachers, who are more likely to initially be hired into such schools, will remain in low-income settings because they feel they could not "make it" elsewhere. Regardless of their seniority, they will not try to transfer. More accomplished teachers, on the other hand, often use transfer privileges to seek out positions in higher status schools. In that system, not only do low-income schools lose many of their most effective teachers to transfer, but transfers also tend to shift the system's marginal teachers to their staffs. Administrators of schools in more desirable locations, even those with large proportions of low-income students, typically receive many requests for transfers into their schools, often from teachers they feel do not share their schools' philosophies. Because of teachers' union seniority policy, the schools with vacancies are usually compelled to accept these transfers.

Significantly, some administrators describe similar problems with transfer policies in the absence of a strong union influence on seniority rules and placement of teachers. Two administrators of high poverty schools in Raymond said that, although their district's transfer rules are not part of teacher contract provisions, transfers both to and from their schools have contributed to their difficulty in building a stable cadre of effective teachers. The district's central office seems to use transfer away from low-income schools to more affluent schools as a kind of reward, a practice recognized in the education literature (e. g., Clark, 1965; Ornstein 1970).

Moreover, the promising new teachers assigned to high poverty concentration schools, a principal explained, are too often lost to higher income schools within a few years. When asked if he might have some examples of the difficulties in keeping good teachers in schools which serve many poor students, he quickly responded, "Oh, you mean teachers leaving here after they've learned how to teach?" He continued:

> "They have used these [low-income] schools as training grounds for teachers. I used to tell my supervisor that such-and-such a teacher is turning out to be really good and in May I would find out that teacher was being moved."

Earlier research into teacher allocation issues has shown that, instead of dealing with the often complex and time-consuming process of dismissal, school officials sometimes resort to the tactic of transferring ineffective teachers from one school to another (Viteritti, 1983; Rogers and Chung 1983). This "bouncing around the system" of unsatisfactory teachers appears to have a particularly detrimental effect on schools where poor children are concentrated. As a principal working in a low-income school bitterly observed, "Rejects, we get them." His school is known as a "dropping off place" for the system's worst teachers. The attitude of district administrators has been, he said, to send teachers to the low-income schools "where [they] can survive."

Another dimension of the teacher transfer problem in North Harbor is the unofficial but common practice of "cutting deals" to get rid of unsatisfactory teachers. This practice takes two primary forms. One is that a teacher is promised a satisfactory rating by a principal after agreeing to transfer to another school. The second is an arrangement between principals that involves an exchange of teachers who are considered unsatisfactory. In his description of this practice, a North Harbor administrator explained that he would often prefer to exchange for a "different problem" rather than continue to tolerate an

unsatisfactory teacher that he had been unable to dismiss. The most obvious negative consequence of these "deals" for urban schools is that ineffective teachers stay in the system--usually working with poor children--rather than being removed from their jobs.

A final problem associated with teacher transfer, serious but rarely discussed, is a kind of public relations dilemma for high poverty schools. An administrator pointed out that he has found it difficult to complain loudly and openly about the quality of his staff because of concern about disparaging the good teachers he feels fortunate to have. Complaints about transfers must be handled delicately, he stressed, because it is important not to "label all my teachers as inferior."

The evidence suggests that the most affluent schools may largely be protected from receiving unwanted transfers of marginal teachers. The principal of an affluent North Harbor school in a wealthy section of the city indicated that she receives very few requests for transfers to her school. Most teachers in less desirable locations, she believes, find her school's neighborhood "foreboding" and feel that the demands for performance from the school's "sophisticated parent group" would be too great. An administrator from Raymond who has worked in both high and low status schools supported this view. He relates that unsatisfactory teachers are rarely sent to middle class, predominantly white schools because parent complaints would make conditions too difficult for office staff.

Only in Cross City was there little expression of dissatisfaction with district transfer practices. Apparently, over the past three or four years the transfer situation there has changed for the better. District policy, developed in cooperation with the local teacher's organization, now allows consideration of the balance of age, sex, length of service, experience in teaching, and race in the effected schools when transfers are requested. Special efforts have been made on the district level to eliminate transfers away from inner-city schools. A principal is allowed to voice opposition to a teacher's request for transfer to another school. If the central personnel office believes the transfer is not in the best interest of the schools involved, it is taken under consideration.

In addition, improvements in equity of teacher allocation in this large metropolitan school system appear to be influenced both by efforts on the district level and by wider community factors. When asked about the low rate of teacher turnover due to transfer, a district official offered several reasons. First, he noted that the number of transfers has "leveled out" after several years of higher

turnover following court-ordered desegregation. The metropolitan organization of his district also makes it easier to attract and hold teachers because "they can't jump across the city limits" to suburban schools.

Second, he attributes the district's effort to "cut down on the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'" in making the majority of schools more attractive to teachers. He explained that district-level personnel "are able to divert things into 'higher needs' schools, a copying machine, some extra paper, a few more field trips." The description was clearly one of a school district actively trying to distribute available resources where needs are perceived to be the greatest. Third, he has begun to see more teachers who "want to work in that location with that kind of student," meaning inner-city schools with large numbers of low-income students. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he claims that there is a personal commitment to "fairness" by the head of the district and other district personnel toward less economically-advantaged students.

A former college dean from the area confirmed this assessment of conditions in Cross City. Describing the schools as "very well desegregated," he reported that there have been efforts to provide special programs for schools with high concentrations of poverty. The district has made "efforts to enrich schools," with new money going to schools with the greatest need. In part, the former dean suggested, this policy represents an "effort to respond to the concerns of more affluent, white parents who want to improve the overall climate of the schools, with programs not for their own kids but for the other [economically-disadvantaged] students in their schools."

Principals' Role in Hiring

When asked about their own influence over hiring decisions in their schools, virtually all of the administrators interviewed in the North Harbor, regardless of their schools' status, agreed that they ultimately play the primary role in the final choice of teachers but that they are powerfully constrained by teacher contract provisions. With one notable exception, the administrator of an especially affluent school in North Harbor, principals believe that these constraints, in many if not most cases, effectively prevent them from exercising their hiring preferences.

In Raymond, the smaller Southeastern district, however, school administrators describe a clearly differentiated role in hiring for principals working in schools of varying status levels. Administrators of

poor, largely African-American schools have traditionally had much less discretion over hiring than their counterparts in more affluent, white schools in the district. While administrators in higher status schools are allowed to virtually hand-pick their teachers, a principal with many years of experience in a high poverty school recalled, "Sometimes I would be called the same morning and told who we were getting. No interview, no understanding of the school. They would just send them on out."

In contrast, centralized teacher allocation practices in Cross City do not appear to generate frustration among administrators. A district official explained that strong consideration is given to the preferences of principals, who are offered an opportunity to "make a case" for the employees whom they believe will strengthen their staffs.

Conclusion and Implications for Policy

In summary, many schools where poor children are concentrated continue to be clearly disadvantaged in their efforts to build effective teaching staffs. Administrators of low-income schools agree that they generally have smaller, lower-quality applicant pools. Their difficulties in developing relationships with student teacher programs places them at a further disadvantage in hiring. Due to seniority-based transfer provisions, the effective teachers whom principals are fortunate to recruit too often leave after they accumulate a few years of experience. On the other hand, their unsatisfactory teachers tend to remain in place unless an exchange for another marginal teacher is arranged.

Low-income schools cannot ordinarily count on parental pressure for high standards of performance to influence their teachers. Poor children isolated in high poverty schools are also not in a position to benefit from advocacy by more influential, affluent parents who may find it in their interest to demand resources that can help all students in their children's schools. In the absence of district-level leadership that attempts to compensate for some disadvantages, administrators of low-income schools continue to face enormous obstacles to attracting, hiring, and retaining effective teachers.

Obviously, some of the conditions associated with inequities in teacher allocation are more amenable to redress through policy changes than others. However, emerging from this research is the clear implication that school districts can implement policies and foster practices which contribute to better access to quality teaching for all students. The findings from Cross City, for example, make a

strong case that the distribution of middle-class and poor students throughout a metropolitan school district, combined with strong leadership advocating equity in the allocation of resources, can result in a situation that helps to meet the needs of teachers, parents, and students.

As the case of Raymond clearly illustrates, central control over hiring and placement is not, however, an assurance that the process will be equitable. Seniority-based transfer policies which move teachers from lower to higher status schools can be supported by unions or initiated by the central office. If teachers who perform well are rewarded for time spent in low-income schools with reassignment to more affluent locations, high poverty concentration schools will continue to operate from a deficit position in attempting to provide quality teaching for their students.

Of crucial concern to low-income schools is the ability to find incentives that will help attract and retain effective teachers. While participants in this study stressed "intrinsic" rewards, they almost uniformly agreed that more "professional" treatment of teachers and recognition of their performance are important in maintaining teacher job satisfaction. Previous research supports the effectiveness of nonpecuniary rewards, but additional findings indicate that teachers may also respond to higher salaries (Ferguson, 1991) or to forms of incentive pay for work in less desirable settings (Bruno, 1982). Recent changes in Title I may allow high-poverty schools to offer some kinds of incentives and resources which administrators and district officials mentioned as important. The new law includes provisions that allow Title I money to be combined with other sources of funding. These additional resources could be used for schoolwide projects such as professional training and activities or the purchase of additional supplies and technology (Hoff, 1997).

Methods of dealing with the issue of teacher transfer should be developed to protect high poverty concentration schools from losing their best teachers and from being forced to receive their district's worst teachers. Approval of transfers by a school-based teacher committee was among the suggestions offered by interview participants. Representatives of teacher's organizations point out in their interviews that this approach has been used successfully in a few urban districts for a number of years. A committee charged with screening potential transfers could help to address union concerns while also insuring that transferring teachers have a better understanding of the school and share a commitment to its mission.

The findings also strongly suggest that additional initiatives should be taken to help more low-income schools develop relationships with student teacher programs in colleges of education. Special efforts will be necessary to overcome concerns about neighborhood safety and working conditions within such schools. In addition, collaboration between interested groups must be fostered. To develop and implement successful policy changes, teacher's organizations, parents, and district officials need to be included in the decisionmaking process.

A commitment by a district's leadership to distribute money and materials where they are needed most and to implement personnel policies which will allow low-income schools an opportunity to attract and retain experienced and well-qualified teachers is needed to assure that all students, regardless of social status, will have more equal opportunities to learn. Even with the many reforms that are currently being proposed to address the problems of urban public education and the many statements of concern regarding equity in resources among schools, the problem of teacher allocation remains too little considered as a policy issue. Admittedly, attention to the issue of more equitable distribution of well-qualified, experienced teachers is only a small part of the efforts needed to offer equal learning opportunities to all students. Numerous reforms in urban education are currently proposed, and statements about inequities in schooling are often heard. However, it is significant to note that the problem of disparities in teacher allocation is rarely addressed. This study represents an effort to give the issue a more prominent place on the educational policy agenda.

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